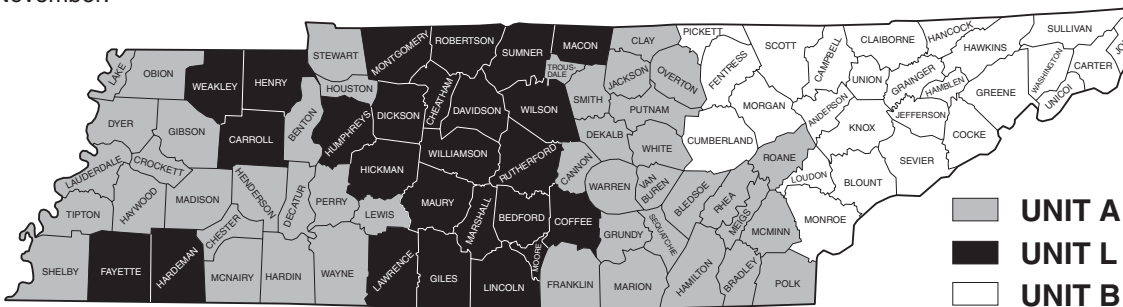


NEW IN 2004

The Tennessee Wildlife Resources Commission has established a third Tennessee deer unit for the 2004-2005 hunting season. Along with the traditional Unit A and Unit B, deer hunters will have an increased opportunity to harvest a deer in the TWRA’s new Unit L, which includes 25 former Unit A counties in Middle and West Tennessee where the annual deer harvests have been some of the state’s highest. Despite the large number of deer, hunters in these counties have not been harvesting enough deer—especially antlerless deer—to keep the numbers in check and the ratio of bucks to does in balance. The 25 new Unit L counties will have much more liberal bag limits. Hunters will now be allowed to harvest three antlerless deer per day during the gun season in the unit. Archery and black powder hunters will also be allowed extra opportunity. Both groups of hunters will be allowed six deer per year, but no more than two may be antlered.

The buck harvest limit remains at three antlered deer per year statewide. However, Unit B will see a reduced bag limit of only two antlered deer. If hunters want to bag a third antlered deer, they may do so by traveling to Units A or L for their last buck. Another significant change in Unit B for this season allows either-sex deer to be harvested during the first three days of the muzzleloader season rather than the last three.

The 2004-2005 deer season will end on January 9 in Units A and L, with a late Young Sportsman hunt scheduled for January 15-16. The early youth hunt has been moved to the last weekend in October and the first segment of muzzleloader season opens on the first weekend of November.



STATEWIDE SUMMARY



In 2003, Tennessee set an all time harvest record with just over 161,000 deer harvested. The vast majority of these deer (~132,200) came from the prolifically rich counties of Unit A located in central and west Tennessee. The more mountainous and rugged counties of Unit B in the eastern part of the state harvested a respectable 14,300 deer while the remaining difference was comprised of deer harvested from the biologically diverse and intensely managed Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) found throughout the state.

Though a record harvest may indicate a burgeoning deer population, the Tennessee herd has increased only slightly over the last decade and the estimation remains at somewhere between 900,000 and 1 million animals. The Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) feels this herd estimate is relatively close to both the biological and cultural carrying capacities throughout most of the state. Although there are some areas in the far eastern and far western portions of the state that are still being managed for herd growth, the vast majority of the state is focusing on maintaining the current herd and improving overall herd health.

A major focus in recent years has been the push toward the creation of a more balanced age structure in the male segment of the herd. In other words, one of our management goals is to increase the number of 2-1/2 year old or older bucks in the population. In 1998, the state of Tennessee reduced the yearly buck bag limit from 11 antlered deer down to 2. The following year it was bumped back up to 3 per year, but it has remained there ever since. This regulation has helped tremendously in improving the age structure of our male herd by allowing more bucks to make it to the next age bracket. The table below clearly illustrates the progress that has been made.

Within the last fifteen years the annual harvest of yearling bucks has decreased from an average of 75% yearlings in the late 1980’s to the current low of just over 50% in the last two seasons. These figures rival most other states in the southeast.

Statewide Deer Harvest Summary*

Year	Buttons	Spikes	3-6 Points	7-10 Points	11+ Points	Not Indicated	Total Bucks	Antlered Deer	Total Does	Total Deer	% Does	% Yearlings
1985	3,120	8,485	20,325	9,595	258	163	41,946	38,663	11,759	53,705	21.9	77.7
1986	5,369	8,927	25,353	13,289	342	192	53,472	47,911	16,928	70,400	24.0	74.8
1987	6,915	10,545	29,954	15,772	439	579	64,204	56,710	26,362	90,566	29.1	77.2
1988	5,803	13,185	27,592	13,636	387	426	61,029	54,800	23,530	84,559	27.8	73.1
1989	7,118	11,348	33,110	17,654	518	1,200	70,948	62,630	29,739	100,687	29.5	77.9
1990	8,209	14,807	31,664	16,230	507	796	72,213	63,208	33,656	105,869	31.8	76.8
1991	8,499	15,356	34,238	16,339	479	1,133	76,044	66,412	37,711	113,755	33.2	76.9
1992	11,454	15,485	32,682	16,335	464	226	76,646	64,966	43,466	120,112	36.2	73.7
1993	11,932	16,462	36,106	20,807	619	982	86,908	73,994	46,239	133,147	34.7	70.8
1994	9,461	18,581	37,108	18,274	590	1,581	85,595	74,553	40,167	125,762	31.9	70
1995	9,426	17,234	42,619	22,637	673	1,704	94,293	83,163	43,694	137,987	31.7	69.5
1996	8,948	20,164	43,412	21,485	676	2,057	96,742	85,737	45,754	142,496	32.1	74.9
1997	9,746	18,896	40,576	22,339	675	2,045	94,277	82,486	49,694	143,971	34.5	70
1998	13,392	10,922	31,136	21,217	818	1,111	78,596	64,093	70,670	149,266	47.3	61.7
1999	9,341	13,620	35,289	24,265	837	1,714	85,066	74,011	52,077	137,143	38.0	56.1
2000	10,428	11,831	37,802	28,373	1,066	918	90,418	79,072	59,062	149,480	39.5	58.6
2001	9,790	14,236	38,882	27,985	1,050	1,397	93,340	82,153	59,280	152,620	38.8	58.5
2002	8,883	12,470	38,365	29,935	1,187	1,587	92,427	81,957	58,110	150,537	38.6	53.1
2003	8,317	13,260	37,650	29,402	1,137	2,640	92,406	81,449	61,945	154,351	40.1	53.4

* Does NOT include WMA harvest numbers.

Another promising trend has been the gradual increase in the percent of does harvested each year. This trend of harvesting more and more females will undoubtedly create a more balanced doe-to-buck ratio. Contrary to common belief, it is biologically and mathematically impossible to have highly skewed sex ratios on large tracts of land (i.e. countywide). Using our harvest data, a doe-to-buck ratio as high as 9:1 means the hunters would be harvesting *every single male deer* in an area. Not only is this impossible but our annual buck harvest remains relatively stable if not increasing. Therefore, according to our best estimates and numerous hunter observations it is our current belief that our doe-to-buck ratio is approximately 3:1 statewide.

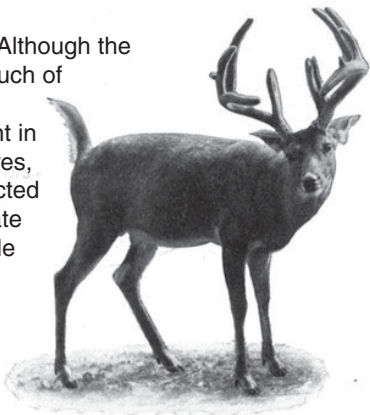


Tennessee hunters are a diverse group. With relatively strong numbers of participants with each weapon type, the total number of hunters within the state has stayed fairly stable. Over the last decade the fastest growing segment of our hunting population has been the muzzleloaders. They continue to account for almost 25% of our overall harvest and 2003 was no exception.

Another portion of the harvest we are particularly interested in is the juvenile harvest. The state is always looking to recruit more and more

hunters to carry on our Tennessee hunting traditions. Although the juvenile harvest fell by 15% from the previous year, much of this decrease can be attributed to the warm weather conditions we experienced during the first juvenile hunt in early November. With unseasonably warm temperatures, the deer simply did not move and thus negatively affected the harvest. With any luck, Mother Nature will cooperate next year and we’ll see a strong rebound in our juvenile harvest.

Overall Tennessee’s deer herd remains healthy as well as the number of hunters within the state. With proper management and hunter cooperation, there is no reason we cannot sustain these favorable trends.



Harvest / Hunter Stats

Total Harvest*	161,072
Total Hunters	214,000
Archery	98,000
Muzzleloaders	141,000
Gun	210,000
Successful Hunters	93,000
Hunter Success	43%

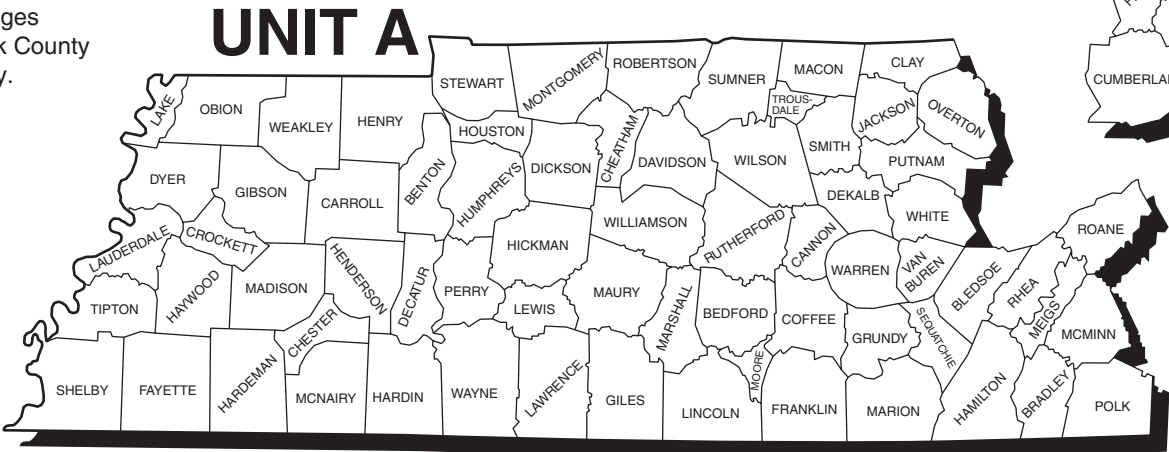
* Includes WMA harvests data and late late kill tag submissions.

2003 TENNESSEE DEER HARVEST

Unit A is comprised of 69 counties spread throughout west and central Tennessee. Although most of Unit A exhibits mature, well-established deer herds, some areas within the Unit aren't as “established”. The lowest deer populations are generally found close to the Mississippi River and the mountainous areas of the Cumberland Plateau while the highest populations are found in the agricultural centers of central and west Tennessee. While there is an abundance of food in the Mississippi River counties, the lack of cover is the limiting factor preventing deer populations from reaching their potential. In the mountainous Plateau regions the limiting factor is the variability of the mast crop. Since there still is room for growth in both these low density areas, antlerless harvest opportunities are limited to stimulate herd expansion.

For the last two years, nearly half of the antlered bucks harvested were from older age classes. The trend toward older bucks began in 1992, jumped significantly in 1998, and appears to be continuing. In 2003, yearling bucks were 49.1% of the harvest, 2-1/2 year old bucks accounted for 37.5%, and 3-1/2 year old bucks or older made up 13.5% of the harvest. The trend toward older bucks in the harvest appears to be due, in part, to hunters selectively passing bucks with smaller antlers.

Doe Harvest: Antlerless deer hunts were held in 48 counties during the 2003 season. The total doe harvest for Unit A was 55,470. This total includes does taken during the muzzleloader and archery season. This was up from 52,630 in 2002. Some of this increase was due to a liberalized doe limit in ten middle Tennessee counties. The liberalized bag limit for doe harvest resulted in an insignificant increase in total doe harvest. Overall, Unit A doe harvest increased by approximately 2,840 (9.5%). Percentage of does in the total harvest increased from 40.5% to 42.0%. County percentages ranged from a low of 19.8% in Polk County to a high of 52.0% in Henry County.



Unit B Harvest Summary

	Archery	Juvenile	Muzzleloader	Regular Gun	Special	Total
2001	4,389	1,335	6,757	8,335	343	21,159
2002	4,116	2,054	4,717	9,373	444	20,704
2003	4,567	1,762	6,012	8,960	857	22,158
	Total Antlered Harvest – 14,324					
	Spike	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	11+
Harvest	3,440	3,510	3,571	3,056	649	98
% of Total	24.0%	24.5%	24.9%	21.3%	4.5%	0.7%

Wildlife Management Areas and Refuges

Many of Tennessee’s most pristine lands are designated as state wildlife management areas (WMA’s), federal wildlife refuges, or national forest lands. These lands are managed as individual units, some of which are open to statewide hunting regulations while others utilize specialized seasons and/or regulations. The total WMA harvest has remained relatively stable over the past

Unit A – 2003 Season Summary:

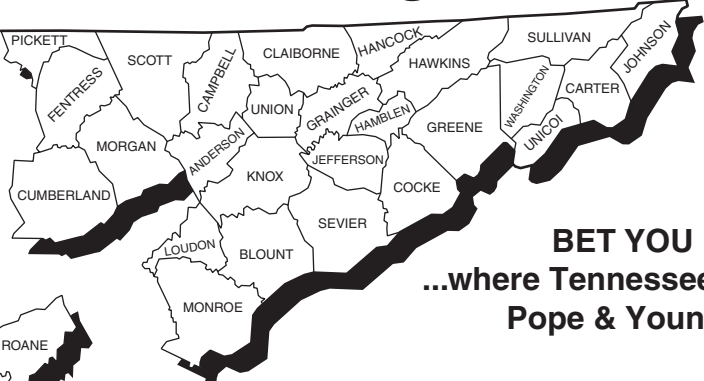
Although total deer harvests continue to increase slowly, much of the increase is due to expanding deer populations in the Mississippi River counties.

Buck Harvest: The total antlered buck harvest has remained relatively stable over the past three years between 67-69,000. However, the percentage of yearling bucks in the harvest continues to decline, indicating a shift to older age classes of bucks in the harvest.

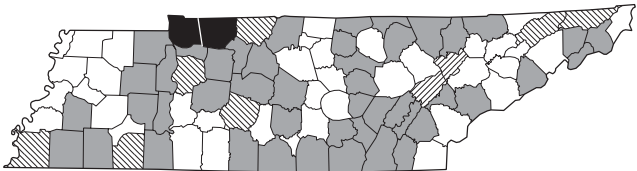
Unit A Harvest Summary

	Archery	Juvenile	Muzzleloader	Regular Gun	Special	Total
2001	16,418	6,176	33,888	42,593	32,950	132,025
2002	14,156	7,386	27,082	48,222	32,987	129,833
2003	14,458	6,293	32,279	45,452	33,711	132,193
	Total Antlered Harvest – 67,125					
	Spike	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	11+
Harvest	9,820	14,223	16,346	20,653	5,044	1,039
% of Total	14.6%	21.2%	24.4%	30.8%	7.5%	1.5%

UNIT B



BET YOU DIDN'T KNOW...
...where Tennessee’s Boone & Crocket and Pope & Young deer came from?



Number of Entries

- 10-12
- 7-9
- 4-6
- 1-3

Unit B

Unit B includes 26 counties all of which are located in east Tennessee. Many of these counties were among the last to be stocked during deer restoration efforts of the 70's and 80's therefore their populations are still growing. Overall, Unit B does not have the agricultural base that the middle and western counties have. Therefore, many deer populations are dependent on mast production. Due to this, and higher human populations, it is unlikely that deer numbers in most of this area will ever be as high as they are in other portions of the state.

Unit B – 2003 Season Summary:

The 3 days of either sex hunting during muzzleloader combined with opening weekend of gun usually make up over one third of the Unit B harvest. The weather cooperated this year and the harvest exceeded 7,500 during this time frame.

Buck Harvest: Total buck harvest was 15,530. This was an increase of 557 (3.7%). Antlered buck harvest increased by 365 (2.6%) and button buck harvest increased by 192 (23%). Yearling bucks accounted for 55.5% of the antlered buck harvest. This was up from 48.7% in 2002. 2-1/2 year olds accounted for 33% of the harvest. This was down from 37.6% in 2002. Spikes accounted for 24% of the antlered harvest. Fentress County had the lowest percentage (12.3%) and Union County had the highest (32.8%). Cumberland, Fentress, Morgan, Pickett, and Scott counties accounted for 68% of the deer with 11 or more points. Interestingly, many of the deer purchased from Wisconsin during the early years of stocking were released in these counties.

Doe Harvest: Quota hunts were held in 11 counties during the 2003 season. The doe harvest was 754. This was up from 401 in 2002. Some of this increase was due to the 6 counties that were added this year. However, doe harvest in counties with existing quota hunts increased by 242 (38%). This was primarily due to increases in the actual quotas. Overall, Unit B doe harvest increased by approximately 993 (18%). Percentage of does in the total harvest increased from 26.8% to 29.4%. County percentages ranged from a low of 19.3% in Monroe County to a high of 36.2% in Hawkins County.

COUNTY	02 Total	Antlered	Antlerless	Does	Button	03 Total
Anderson	779	514	305	261	44	819
Bedford	1,780	852	790	726	64	1,642
Benton	1,984	1164	995	871	124	2,159
Bledsoe	656	489	315	243	72	804
Blount	317	212	120	104	16	332
Bradley	547	461	260	229	31	721
Campbell	856	630	307	268	39	937
Cannon	769	452	313	275	38	765
Carroll	3,624	1,917	1813	1634	179	3,730
Carter	1,191	639	454	380	74	1,093
Cheatham	1,335	793	615	509	106	1,408
Chester	1,132	706	544	496	48	1,250
Claiborne	1,440	1,075	684	605	79	1,759
Clay	1,132	626	524	456	68	1,150
Cocke	757	620	287	269	18	907
Coffee	1,677	826	733	643	90	1,559
Crockett	253	203	68	55	13	271
Cumberland	827	692	221	179	42	913
Davidson	1,002	562	547	474	73	1,109
Decatur	1,312	821	718	623	95	1,539
DeKalb	1,442	924	629	550	79	1,553
Dickson	2,846	1,641	1581	1400	181	3,222
Dyer	598	410	255	219	36	665
Fayette	4,009	2,174	1960	1786	174	4,134
Fentress	650	460	156	130	26	616
Franklin	3,325	1,644	1735	1566	169	3,379
Gibson	1,414	825	552	486	66	1,377
Giles	4,779	2,310	2726	2398	328	5,036
Grainger	989	655	331	265	66	986
Greene	970	696	295	258	37	991
Grundy	961	588	457	388	69	1,045
Hamblen	266	234	102	92	10	336
Hamilton	895	639	378	326	52	1,017
Hancock	830	651	389	343	46	1,040
Hardeman	5,168	2,647	2871	2591	280	5,518
Hardin	2,521	1,436	1244	1117	127	2,680
Hawkins	2,622	1,594	1055	960	95	2,649
Haywood	1,793	1,023	824	747	77	1,847
Henderson	1,614	1,015	679	595	84	1,694
Henry	5,267	2,192	3000	2687	313	5,192
Hickman	3,657	1,927	1959	1711	248	3,886
Houston	1,243	614	474	401	73	1,088
Humphreys	3,174	1,547	1779	1608	171	3,326
Jackson	1,943	1,180	754	642	112	1,934
Jefferson	735	562	328	297	31	890
Johnson	1,457	826	563	498	65	1,389
Knox	224	211	69	61	8	280
Lake	775	126	86	77	9	212
Lauderdale	812	600	273	243	30	873
Lawrence	2,556	1,263	1167	981	206	2,450
Lewis	1,553	808	791	656	135	1,599
Lincoln	4,272	1,922	2373	2131	242	4,295
Loudon	525	377	148	132	19	625
McMinn	1,151	764	467	397	70	1,231
McNairy	2,599	1,558	1372	1262	110	2,930
Macon	1,519	752	713	637	76	1,465
Madison	3,152	1,683	1558	1426	132	3,241
Marion	1,346	707	502	465	37	1,209
Marshall	1,957	1,027	1002	880	122	2,029
Maury	3,325	1,537	1661	1482	179	3,198
Meigs	1,299	770	590	505	85	1,360
Monroe	375	269	83	68	15	352
Montgomery	3,725	1,443	1382	1226	156	2,825
Moore	927	485	501	456	45	986
Morgan	971	793	312	266	46	1,105
Obion	1,709	930	703	643	60	1,633
Overton	1,677	968	852	747	105	1,820
Perry	1,538	936	835	720	115	1,771
Pickett	286	234	87	81	6	321
Polk	153	88	23	22	1	111
Putnam	1,133	681	354	297	57	1,045
Rhea	1,731	882	701	595	106	1,583
Roane	1,801	980	847	697	150	1,827
Robertson	1,552	797	567	506	61	1,364
Rutherford	1,745	917	856	776	80	1,773
Scott	1,261	951	395	347	48	1,346
Sequatchie	803	361	344	283	61	705
Sevier	336	254	87	75	12	341
Shelby	716	510	213	196	17	723
Smith	2,242	1,046	967	802	165	2,013
Stewart	2,016	1,079	859	763	96	1,938
Sullivan	1,114	845	371	315	56	1,216
Sumner	2,196	1,206	1077	958	119	2,283
Tipton	457	399	141	127	14	540
Trousdale	740	378	392	348	44	770
Unicoi	328	219	127	99	28	346
Union	311	254	126	104	22	380
Van Buren	907	478	387	320	67	865
Warren	932	557	358	305	53	915
Washington	289	198	91	83	8	289
Wayne	2,578	1,471	1369	1150	219	2,840
Weakley	3,679	1,759	1731	1545	186	3,490
White	1,395	869	594	492	102	1,463
Williamson	1,928	1,056	973	887	86	2,029
Wilson	1,985	1,009	1080	954	126	2,089
Total	150,537	84,085	70,266	61,949	8,317	154,351



Taylor Grahm, 11
Cumberland County
“4 Point”



Billy Word
Giles County
“8 Point”



Jeremy Goldsby, 16
Madison County
“First Bow Kill”



Luck of the Draw
President's Island WMA
“Local Brute”



Kayla Boyd
Carroll County
“5 Point”



Shane Brown
Chester County
“First Deer Back From Iraq”



Scott Charnell, 13
Franklin County
“6 Point”



Chris Hobbs
Hardeman County
“Unique Rack”



Megan Wilder
Claiborne County
“First Deer”



Tommy Hooker, 12
Manchester, TN
“First Buck”



Jeff Greene
Weakley County
“10 Point”



Josh Phillips
Bedford County
“Largest Buck”